Swiss German dialects spoken by second-generation immigrants: bilingual speech and dialect transformation

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1730386

Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

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Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Paper
Keywords:	Bilingualism, Codeswitching, Dialect, Heritage Languages, Immigrants
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ABSTRACT

German-speaking Switzerland is characterised by a type of diglossia where the 'low variety' is used in almost all domains of everyday communication. For children of immigrant workers, a Swiss German dialect normally constitutes one of their two first languages. Nevertheless, one can observe two different scenarios how the dialect enters the repertoire of these multilingual subjects.

The first scenario entails the combined use of a heritage language (e.g., Italian) and a Swiss German dialect. Code-switching among peers of the same ethnic group serves a wide array of discourse and social functions, above all the expression of a composite bicultural identity, but the employed varieties do not differ structurally from those of monolingual speakers.

The second scenario, instead, gives rise to a structural transformation of the traditional dialects. For instance, an individual speaker may be perceived as originating from a particular region of Switzerland on the basis of his or her vowel qualities, whereas at the same time the voicing of (normally unvoiced) plosives makes him or her recognisable as a person with an immigrant background. Our analysis focuses on these linguistic transformations of dialects into '(multi-)ethnolectal' dialects, whose social function seem to lie in the signalling of an allochthonous ('non-Swiss') identity.

Keywords: code-switching; dialect transformation; (multi-)ethnolect; Swiss German dialects; sociophonetics; second-generation immigrants

1. Introduction

Whereas in most cases of multilingual and multicultural development the ultimate 'target' is represented by some variety of a standard language, the present study mainly deals with the acquisition of a dialect by second-generation immigrants. For these individuals, dialect acquisition is indeed the unmarked choice in German-speaking Switzerland, one of the classical examples of 'diglossia' discussed in Ferguson's (1959) seminal publication. It has to be noted, however, that in this particular diglossic situation the so called 'low variety' occupies a considerably strong position, such that the vernacular (i.e. an Alemannic dialect)[1] constitutes the normal variety used for most oral communication in everyday life, whereas the 'high variety' (i.e. Swiss Standard German) serves above all written and formal oral communication (Rash 1998). All autochthonous inhabitants of German-speaking Switzerland are native speakers of a particular regional dialect, while Standard German is taught at school. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the dialect constitutes the predominant component in the sociolinguistic repertoire of second-generation immigrants (cf. Ender and Strassl 2009) – quite differently from neighbouring southern Germany (cf. Auer, this issue).

What is interesting, though, is the fact that second-generation immigrants have developed different ways of integrating the dialect in their sociolinguistic repertoire, which ultimately correspond to different ways of coping with their multilingual and multicultural life. In this contribution, I will present in more detail two possible sociolinguistic scenarios – respectively labelled 'bilingual speech' and 'dialect transformation' – which will be illustrated with conversational data and sociophonetic analyses. Note that these 'scenarios' are not meant to be neither mutually exlusive nor exhaustive.

2. Two scenarios for the sociolinguistic development of migrant communities

2.1 The bilingual speech scenario

The phenomenology of code-switching is at the heart of a model which was proposed twenty years ago by Auer (1999). This dynamic typology of bilingual speech, which among other sociolingustic contexts can be applied to migrant languages as well, postulates a diachronic development through three stages "from code-switching via language mixing to fused lects" (as stated in the very title of the study).

Within this model, the term 'code-switching' is intended in a narrow sense, i.e. as a form of language alternation which occurs in the speech of (not necessarily 'balanced') bilinguals between major syntactic and prosodic boundaries; an important property of code-switching is that it conveys precise 'local', i.e. contextually determined participant and discourse related meanings (cf. Auer 1984). Instead, 'language mixing' is practiced by highly fluent bilinguals and occurs also within minor syntactic constituents; contrarily to code-switching in the narrow sense, such language mixing is assumed not to bear contextual meanings.[2] In the final stage, bilingual speakers may then create so-called 'fused lects' which can thus be seen as the result of grammaticalization. For the purpose of our contribution, it is interesting to note that Auer (1999, 314-315) – drawing on Franceschini (1998) – finds a typical example of language mixing in the combined use of a Swiss German dialect and Italian by second-generation immigrants (see section 4 for an analysis of recent conversational data from Swiss German/Italian bilinguals).

2.2 The ethnolect scenario

The notion of 'ethnolect' was first introduced in connection with the description of 'ethnic varieties' of American English (cf. Carlock and Wölck, 1981). In the U.S. context, 'ethnicity' is a conceived of in rather broad sense (e.g., "African American English" or "Chicano English") and continues to be a frequent topic in sociophonetic research (cf. Purnell 2010).

A somewhat different orientation has been taken with regard to the sociolinguistic situation in a number of European countries, for which a distinction between 'ethnolects' and 'multiethnolects' was proposed by Clyne (2000, 86-87): the former type of language variety marks "speakers as members of ethnic groups", whereas the latter are used by certain social groups in order to "collectively express their minority status" or "a new kind of group identity". In the same year, the notion of 'multiethnolect' was introduced by Quist (2000) in a paper on linguistic and cultural heterogeneity in Denmark. It appears that the linguistic features in the speech of second-generation migrants do not necessarily reveal traces of one particular heritage language. Indeed, the new ways of speaking which emerged towards the end of the last century in several northern and western European metropolitan areas are spoken among youth with different ethnic backgrounds, as is witnessed by a number of contributions gathered in a special issue of the *International Journal of Bilingualism* (2008, vol. 12, 1-2).

Probably the most articulated model of multiethnolectal development has been elaborated by Auer (2003) with regard to the ways of speaking used by youth with immigration background in Germany. More precisely, this scenario distinguishes between primary, secondary and tertiary ethnolects (or multiethnolects). Primary ethnolects are spoken by second-generation immigrants and may reflect linguistic features from different heritage languages, thus positioning speakers in a multilingual urban culture. Primary ethnolects of German and its linguistic features have been investigated in several urban contexts (Auer 2003, 2013) both on the level of grammar (e.g., Wiese 2009) and pronunciation (e.g., Jannedy and Weirich 2014). Secondary ethnolects, instead, are media constructions and (usually) exaggerations of primary ethnolects which have been created for hilarious purposes by comedians in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, tertiary ethnolects appear in the format of 'crossings' (Rampton 2005) in the speech of monolingual non-immigrant speakers who imitate (probably with the secondary ethnolects in mind) some features of primary ethnolects. Auer's

(2003) model is perfectly applicable to the Swiss German situation, but in this contribution, I will focus on primary multiethnolects.

3. Dialect acquisition among first-generation immigrants

Before moving to code-switching and ethnolectal speech among second-generation immigrants, let us briefly illustrate the phenomenon of dialect acquisition in German-speaking Switzerland from the perspective of a first-generation immigrant. Obviously, immigrants who arrive in Switzerland as adults have to cope with the diglossic situation outlined in the Introduction. Unfortunately, the acquisition of Swiss German dialects by first-generation immigrants is an underresearched phenomenon, yet it lies outside the scope of the present contribution to fill this gap. Nevertheless, in order to better understand the use of dialects by immigrants who grew up in Switzerland, it may be useful to shortly have a look at how the generation of their parents acquired the local varieties. The following excerpt, which is drawn from a biographical interview conducted by Pascal Mora in the year 2005, illustrates the speech of an Italian foreign worker, who migrated to Zurich in his late adolescence and was in his fifties at the time of the interview:

(1) 1 Ja ich normal macht eh *komme* ganz jung
yes I normal makes uhm *come* very young

2 asoo + ich *komme* dòò *in Schweiz*
well, I come here *in Switzerland*

3 mit mini Vater scho bliibe *hier*
with my father already remain *here*

4 und *dann* ich choo:: tuusig nüünhundert driiesächzg
and *then* I come thousand ninehundred sixty-three (= 1963)

5 und *dann* aber *bleibe* ungefèèr sächs Jahr
and *then* after stay about six years

6 und dänn mache wäg in Italie für Militèèr
and then make away in Italy for military

As becomes clear from the transcript, the speech of this learner is rather fluent, but his German contains some typical features of an interlanguage. For instance, third person singular verb forms are used for the first person (e.g. *macht* in line 1) and vice versa (e.g. *bliibe* in line 3). Dropping of the personal pronoun in lines 5 and 6 may be an interference from the L1; the order of the numbers in the date 1963 (line 4) is definitely based on the Italian model.

From the point of dialect acquisition, the most interesting question to ask is whether this is a learner variety of Standard German or of the Zurich dialect. For many lexical items, the question cannot be answered as they are homonymous; in the transcript, such 'neutral' words are rendered with regular type. Word forms attributable to Standard German are in italics, whereas clearly dialectal items are underlined. Counting the different types of word forms which appear in example (1), we find that out of 40 words 20 are 'neutral', 8 clearly come from Standard German and 12 belong to the dialect. Apparently, in this learner variety there is no fixed relationship between certain lexical items and their corresponding language varieties: for the same concept, we find both the standard and the dialect word, as in shown by the word pairs *komme* 'come' (lines 1, 2) vs. *choo* (line 4) and *bliibe* 'remain' (line 3) vs. *bleibe* (line 5). Obviously, the co-presence of word forms pertaining to different varieties is not the result of code-switching or language mixing, but rather constitutes a defining feature of a composite interlanguage, a blend between the local Zurich dialect and Standard German.

4. Bilingual speech: code-switching and dialect acquisition in the Italian community

Now turning to second-generation immigrants and to the two specific scenarios of dialect acquisition mentioned above, I will first investigate the phenomenon of bilingual speech. This scenario entails frequent code-switching between a migrant language and a Swiss German dialect – a communicative behaviour which has been documented since the 1980s, in particular within the Italian community (Franceschini, Müller and Schmid 1984). With regard to the maintenance of the heritage language it has been verified that the Italian spoken by these

youngsters revealed only little interference from Swiss German dialects and rather resembled substandard varieties spoken by monolinguals in Italy (Schmid 1993). However, the structural development of the heritage language is not the primary concern of this contribution. Rather, I would like to investigate how the Swiss German dialect is used in bilingual speech and to which extent its linguistic features differs from more traditional dialectal varieties.

The data presented here are part of a corpus of bilingual conversations which consists of recordings during interactions such as dinners among friends (Russo 2013); all in all, 17 interlocutors were recorded while taking part in six different communicative events. The extract reported in example (2) is part of a chat between two young women of Italian descent (KC and VR) who, during the coffee break at work, talk about the migration stories of their families (cf. Schmid and Russo 2017, 231):

(2) 1 KC *ebbè mio padre era emigrato in Svizzera*
well my father had emigrated to Switzerland
mia mamma era emigrata |in Germania|
my mother had emigrated to Germany

2 VR |sind s scho/| sind s scho
had they already had they already
vo chind uuf daa gsi oder was?
been here as children or what?

3 KC näi *mio padre è venuto a diciottanni*
no *my father came when he was eighteen years old*

4 VR aha
I see

5 KC mini mueter *aveva tre quattro anni* glaub s
my mother *was three four years old*, I think

6 VR sind/ händ s/ händ s niemert kännt daa
were did they didn' they know anybody here?
din vater won er mit achtzäni da hère choo isch?
your father when he came here as an eighteen years old?

7 KC *mio nonno*
my grandfather

8 VR aa
aha

9 KC ja *c'erano* mega vil *paesani e mezzo* |Winterthur ja|
Yes *there were* very many *people from the village and half* Winterthur yes

10 VR |e *pure da noi*|
in our town as well

ee bi ois au ali *del paese* daa in Züri (LAUGHING)
in our town as well all the people *from the village* here in Zurich

It becomes clear that these speakers display a strong form of language mixing. Nevertheless, at second sight this short episode – which consists of only ten turns – reveals an impressive variety of forms and functions of language alternation. Note that in the first two turns both KC and VR produce each a completely monolingual utterance in what appears to be their preferred languages, i.e. Italian and Swiss German dialect, respectively (see Russo 2013, 121-127); such personal switching preferences may thus be regarded as instances of 'participant related code-switching' (Auer 1984). In the following turns 3 and 5, KC partially accommodates to the language preference of VR: in turn 3 she simply takes up the language of her interlocutor with the initial holophrastic negation *näi* and then returns to Italian, whereas turn 5 provides a nice example of language mixing, with the grammatical subject in Swiss German and the predicate in Italian, followed by an utterance-final tag in Zurich German. The adjacency pair in turns 7 and 8 repeats the initial pattern of alternating monolingual utterances, but then KC insists with a heavily mixed contribution, placing two Swiss German tags (*ja*) at the beginning and at the end of the utterance and – most interestingly – a mixed noun phrase in the middle of it (mega vil *paesani* 'very many people from the village'). Such mixing constitutes a sort of 'compromise' between the language preferences of the two interlocutors; in a sense, it can thus be regarded as participant related as well. Finally, it is VR who utters the highly mixed turn 10, reproducing the same language alternation pattern as her interlocutor by using a very similar mixed noun phrase (ali *del paese* 'all from the village').

In the conversation presented in example (2), the degree of bilingual speech increases continuously and reaches its climax in the last two turns, with a temporal overlapping between the end of turn 9 and the beginning of turn 10. The general crescendo in language mixing goes hand in hand with an increasing conceptual alignment: the interlocutors discover that both families have similar migration histories and that there exist both in Zurich and in Winterthur

strong social networks that are determined by the origin from the same village in southern Italy. From the point of view of multilingual identity, the conversational achievement appears to be a common feeling of double belonging to both the culture of the heritage language and the society the two speakers live in.

For the study of dialect acquisition, the possible presence of 'local' meanings in language mixing is not directly relevant. What is interesting, though, is the fact that frequent language mixing must not necessarily lead to a compenetration of the two linguistic systems. Indeed, looking at the structural features of the Zurich German dialect spoken in example (2), one finds that both grammar and lexis characterize the speech of VR and KC as fully native and typical of Swiss German youth language today, as is evident from the use of the quantifier *mega* 'very' in turn 9. Quite luckily, the audio files of Russo's (2013) recordings are at our disposal, such that they can be analyzed from the phonetic point as well. A typical segmental feature of Swiss German dialects is the lack of voiced obstruents, which puts them not only in opposition to Italian but to most immigrant languages in Switzerland. Instead, the Swiss German dialects display a phonological contrast between 'fortis' and 'lenis' stops and fricatives, the latter being phonetically transcribed with the symbols of voiced consonants to which the diacritic for voicelessness is added, e.g. [b̥] or [z̥] as in [ˈb̥æz̥ə] 'broom'. This state of affairs has been described by dialectologists for a long time and has been repeatedly documented by phoneticians (for an overview, see Fleischer and Schmid 2006, Ladd and Schmid 2018).

So let us see how Zurich German lenis stops are realised by speakers VR and KC. Fig. 1 represents the segmented and annotated waveform of the words *kännt daa* 'known here' as pronounced by speaker VR in turn 6, whereas Fig. 2 shows the word *mega* 'very' in speaker KC's turn 9:

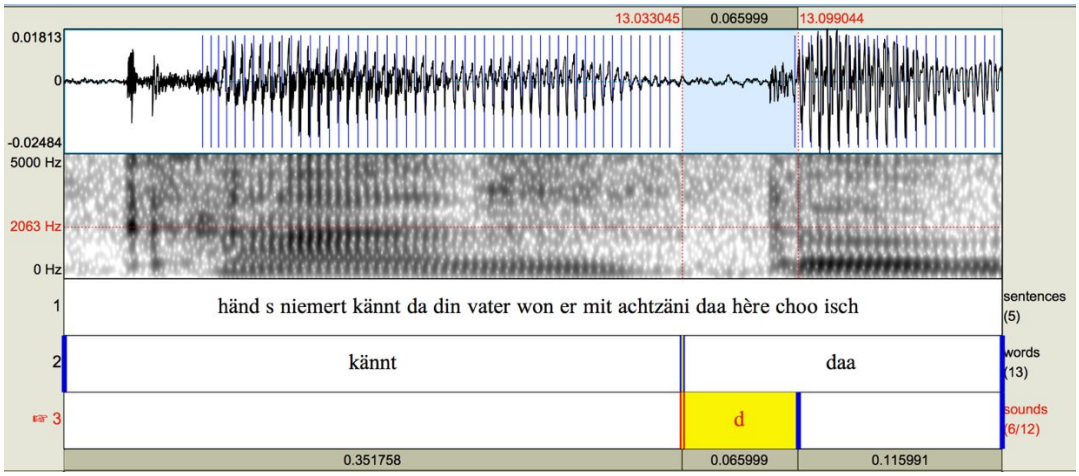

Figure 1: Waveform and spectrogram of the words *känt daa* pronounced by speaker VR

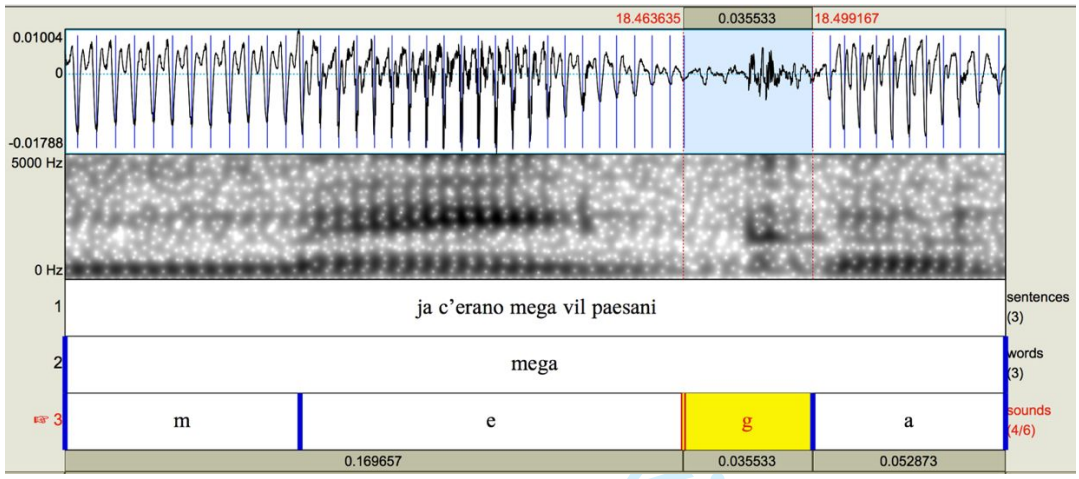

Figure 2: Waveform and spectrogram of the word *mega* pronounced by speaker KC

In both figures, the highlighted portions of the speech signal correspond to lenis stops (which for the sake of simplicity are represented by the orthographic letters <d> and <g>). A closer inspection of the waveform reveals that the consonant under examination is indeed pronounced voicelessly. The lack of vocal fold vibration is substantiated by the aperiodic nature of the sound wave at the selected time frames, where no vertical blue lines appear.

Therefore, both speakers adhere to the prevailing voiceless realisation of the lenis stops [d̥] and [g̊], according to the pronunciation norm of traditional Swiss German dialects. In Fig. 1, we also observe the fortition of underlying /d̥/ following its assimilation to the preceding /t/, according to a canonical sandhi rule of Zurich German (Moulton 1986; cf. Fleischer and Schmid

2006, 248-249). In Fig. 2, it is notable for our purpose that the Zurich German words *mega vil* 'very many' containing the voiceless lenis stop are inserted in an Italian syntactic frame (*c'erano _ _ paesani* 'there were _ _ people from the village'). This means that for the current conversation speaker KC has activated a bilingual speech mode in which the two phonological and phonetic systems of both Italian and Zurich German are alternatively available for speech processing at rapidly changing intervals. Observations of this kind lead us to the conclusion that second-generation Italians in German-speaking Switzerland are highly competent and fluent in the two central varieties of their language repertoire, and that Swiss German and Italian are two separate entities in their bilingual repertoire: as for now, no fused lect has arisen yet.

5. Dialect transformation: Swiss German multiethnolects

With a certain delay, compared to neighbouring Germany, multiethnolectal manners of speaking appeared in German-speaking Switzerland shortly after the year 2000. Given the diglossic situation outlined in the Introduction, it is clear that the variety which undergoes ethnolectal transformation cannot be Standard German, but must be a regional dialect. Nevertheless, Auer's (2003) ethnolect model has proven to be perfectly suitable to the Swiss situation as well, as instances of all types of ethnolects (primary, secondary and tertiary) have been found and documented (Tissot, Schmid and Galliker 2009; Schmid 2011, 2017). As already anticipated, in this contribution I will focus only on the primary ethnolect.

5.1 *Primary ethnolect: an example*

Let us start with an extract from a famous TV show which was broadcast in the year 2001 on a Swiss private channel. In that particular show, a young man called Osman participated in a debate on physical violence among youngsters pleading in favour of beating up people. The extract reproduces part of a dialogue between Osman (O) and the host of the TV show (F):

(3)

1	O	jaa wänn ich zum bischpiil irgendwo ane gang und so uf well, for instance if I go out somewhere like into
		t schtraass und wänn mich äine blöd aaluegt und so wäisch the street and if somebody stares at me in a stupid fashion, you know
2	F	eh was was blöd aaluegt? eh what what? stares at you in a stupid fashion?
3	O	ja so schief aaluegt und so wäisch yes kind of looking at me at an angle, you know
		grichtig im Auge ine wäisch gright (sic!) in the eye, you know
4	F	ehe aha
5	O	und dänn füül ich mich provoziert oder and then I feel provoked, innit
6	F	und was passiert denn? and what happens then?
7	F	ja passiert nüüt dänn säg im aaschtändig Well, happens nothing, then tell him decently
		häsch du s probleem mit mir oder nöd oder do you have a problem with me or not, innit?
8	F	ja yes
9	O	und wänn er säit jaa dänn sch: öppis anderes and if he says yes then is something different
10	F	was isch denn angersch what is different then?
11	O	ja dänn: dänn regle mer s andersch ume wäisch well then then we handle it the other way round you know
12	F	wie reglisch s de? how do you handle it ?
13	O	ja dänn: mit fuuscht well then with fist

There can be no doubt that Osman's Zurich German is closer to the variety spoken by the young Italians in example (2) than to the interlanguage of the first-generation immigrant in example (1). Nevertheless, Osman's speech contains a few elements that resemble an advanced learner variety, such as linguistic simplification and mixture between standard German and Swiss German dialect. In two utterances he uses word forms that belong to Standard German rather than to the local dialect: in turn 9, the adjective *anderes* ('different' or 'other') contains a final unstressed schwa, which is lacking in the corresponding *anders* of traditional Zurich

German. Similarly, in turn 3 the noun *Auge* 'eye' is pronounced like in Standard German, with a final schwa that is absent in the corresponding dialectal form *Aug*. One may take this as a clue to the amount and nature of input Osman has been exposed to in his dialect acquisition, which probably occurred relatively late and above all in the school context (where much standard language is spoken as well).

The expression *im Auge ine* 'in the eye' reveals another feature of Osman's dialectal variety: the inflected preposition *im* (a fusion of the preposition *i* 'in' and the definitive article *em*) is in the oblique case denoting a locative meaning, whereas the directional meaning of the preceding verb *aaluege* (literally 'look at', here 'stare at') would require the prepositional form *is* (a fusion of the preposition *i* 'in' and the definitive article *s* in the non-oblique case). Preposition selection and case assignment are notoriously variable areas of interlanguage grammar. There are more features of linguistic simplification in example (3). While the absence of the overt subject pronouns *es* 'it' and *ich* 'I' in turn 7 (respectively, in the expressions *passiert nüt* and *säg im*) may be the effect of some sort of 'allegro' syntax which is typical of colloquial spoken language, there is one suppression of a function word that is in any case heavily marked in Swiss German, i.e. the lack of the definite article at the very end of the episode: *mit fuuscht* 'with fist'. As already mentioned, the suppression of articles and prepositions is an emblematic feature of primary ethnolects both in Germany and in Switzerland (Auer 2003, Tissot, Galliker and Schmid 2011), which may be interpreted as a socially meaningful deviation from the grammatical norm, attributable to the typical makeup of youth language.

It is particularly on the phonetic level that Osman's speech reveals some typical ethnolectal features, among which the highly salient voicing of lenis plosives has been signalled as one of the most salient ones (Schmid 2011, 2012). Indeed, Osman shows a strong tendency to pronounce lenis stops voiced, as can been seen in Fig. 3:

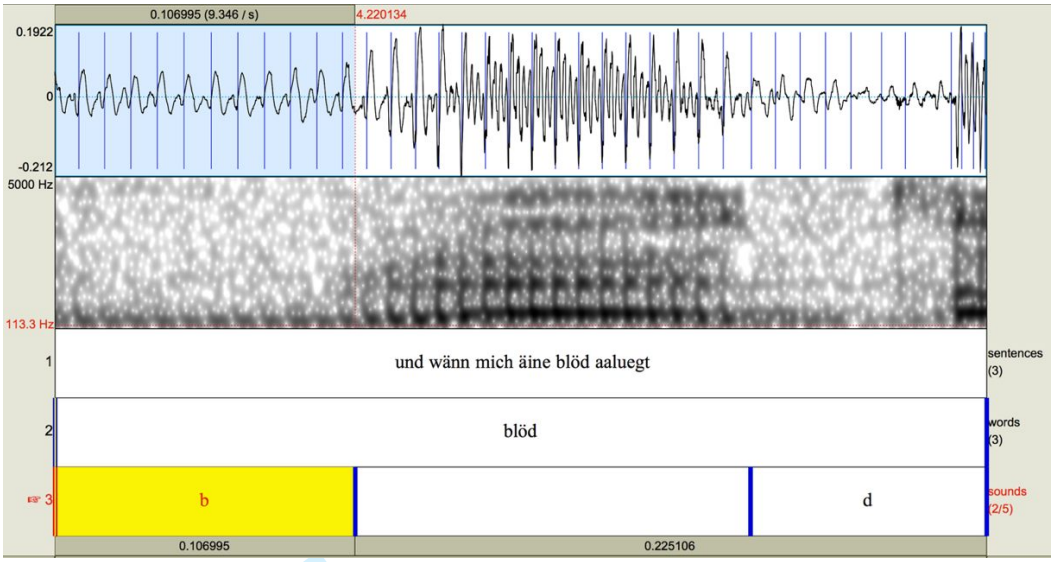

Figure 3: Waveform and spectrogram of the word *blöd* 'stupid' pronounced by Osman

The word *blöd* 'stupid', which occurs in turn 1, contains two lenis plosives: the word-initial bilabial segment is fully voiced, as can be seen from the absolutely periodic waveform in the highlighted portion of the acoustic signal, whereas the word-final alveolar stop loses its periodicity towards the release phase at the end. Despite such natural variability, the voicing of lenis plosives is a pervasive feature of Osman's ethnolect: during the recording reported in example (3) he produced 21 tokens of the phonemes /b̥ d̥ g̊/ of which only 3 were not completely voiced.

5.2 *Primary ethnolect: bilingual speech and dialect transformation*

The fourth and last conversational excerpt brings together the two scenarios investigated in this contribution, i.e. bilingual speech and dialect transformation. This can be illustrated by means of a transcript from a video recorded by Häberli and Wollensack (2006) in the main railway station of Zurich. In this recording, a young woman called Blerta is talking to an Albanian-speaking friend on her cellular phone, making nasty remarks about a female schoolmate of theirs:[3]

(4) 1 Hoi (LAUGHING) *kurgja, ti*? (.) Ja voll im Fall
hi (LAUGHING) *Nothing, you*? Yeah, fully the case
(x) *ski qka me ba* si isch halt so uf de Wält

(x) *you can't do anything*, that's how she behaves on (the) earth

(.) Charakter vo ire (.)
character of her

ich wundere mich äifach wi si Leer überchoo hätt
I really wonder how she got apprenticeship

obwol sii so dumm isch
although she is so stupid

(…)

2 Aber zum Glück wäisch (.)
but luckily, you know

gömmer nach London und si chömed nöd mit (.)
we go to London and they are not coming with us

das isch en Vortäil (.) dass si nöd chömed (.)
that is an advantage (.) that they are not coming

wil susch hettemer müese foif Tääg mit dene
because otherwise we would have had to [spend] five days with them

bashk me nejt
stay together

das isch au nöd (.) gäil
that is not, either (.) cool

(…)

3 me gseet sich, tschau, *tung*
we'll see each other, bye, *bye*

Compared with the Italian example (2), Blerta's speech appears to be less bilingual. She starts her opening turn by switching from the Swiss German greeting *hoi* to the following conversation routine in Albanian. At the beginning of utterance 1 she switches forth and back from Zurich German to Albanian, but the switches are between and not within sentences. There is, however, a syntactically complex case of language mixing towards the end of utterance 2, with an Albanian verb phrase embedded in a higher level Swiss German VP. There seem to be no conversational functions of code-switching in Blerta's speech, apart from the reiteration in the bilingual farewell at the end (tschau *tung*). All in all, both code-switching and language mixing seem to serve here the expression of a bilingual and bicultural identity, or maybe even the "balancing of the bilingual-bicultural identity" (Schader 2006, 86). In a large-scale sociological survey among Albanian-speaking school pupils, 86% of the respondents declared bilingual speech to be a common practice among peers, albeit with some individual differences within the sample (Schader 2006, 77). It has been maintained that the low prestige of Albanians

in Switzerland results in a situation where "many Albanians, at least in the public domain, assert their bilingualism less than, for example, the Italian migrants with their rich tradition" (Schader 2006, 85).

Moving back to the linguistic analysis of example (4), one notices that Blerta's speech is very fluent. Compared to the previous speakers, her dialect again differs from the one spoken by the Italian bilinguals in examples (2), resembling much more Osman's dialectal variety. Her grammar shows variable use of definite and indefinite articles, which are sometimes realised and sometimes not. For instance, in the second line of the first utterance one finds a definite article within the prepositional phrase *uf de Wält* (literally 'on the earth'), and in the third line of the second utterance there is a nominal predicate with an indefinite article (*das isch en Vortäil* 'that is an advantage'). On the other hand, in line 3 of the first utterance the definite article is omitted in the expression *Charakter vo ire* 'character of her', and so is the indefinite article in the following line in the subordinate clause *wi si Leer überchoo hätt* 'how she got apprenticeship'. Article dropping seems thus to be a recurrent feature of Swiss German ethnolects, though a quantitative study on this topic is lacking for the time being.

Now turning to Blerta's pronunciation, an interesting phenomenon appears in the adjective *dumm* 'stupid' (last line of the first part), which is realised with a word-initial lenis plosive like in Standard German; in Zurich German, however, the corresponding lexical item is /tum/ as an outcome of a diachronic fortition process. Blerta's Zurich German may show a certain amount of mixture between dialect and Standard German as well, even if probably to a lesser extent than Osman's idiolect. As regards the phonetic realisation of Blerta's lenis plosives, the auditory impression suggests a rather voiced pronunciation, but the acoustic analysis of the audio file turns out to be difficult because of the presence of background noise. Fig. 4 represents the words *so dumm* 'so stupid' which occur in the last line of the part 1 of the transcript: contrarily to expected, the word-initial [d̥] in *dumm* appears to be voiceless.

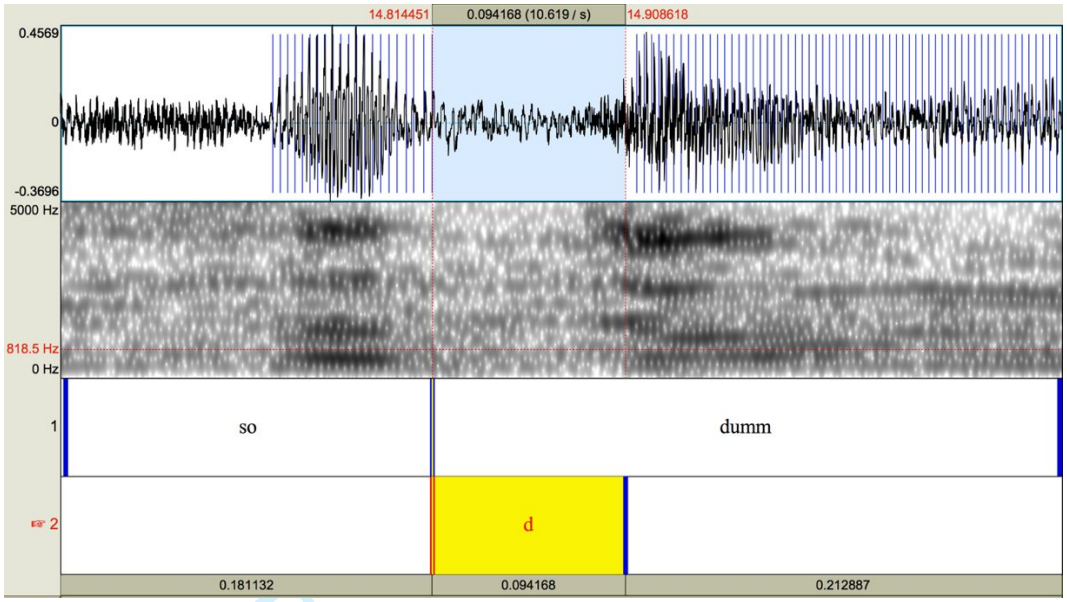

Figure 4: Waveform and spectrogram of the words *so dumm* 'so silly' pronounced by Blerta

Instead, a more variable picture arises in Fig. 5: the word-initial /g̊/ in *gömmer* 'we go' (second line of part 2) seems to be fully voiced, and the same holds for the most part of /d̥/ in her realisation of *London*. These provisional findings call for an in-depth analysis of lenis plosives in Swiss German ethnolects, using recordings of better acoustic quality and of a larger number of speakers.

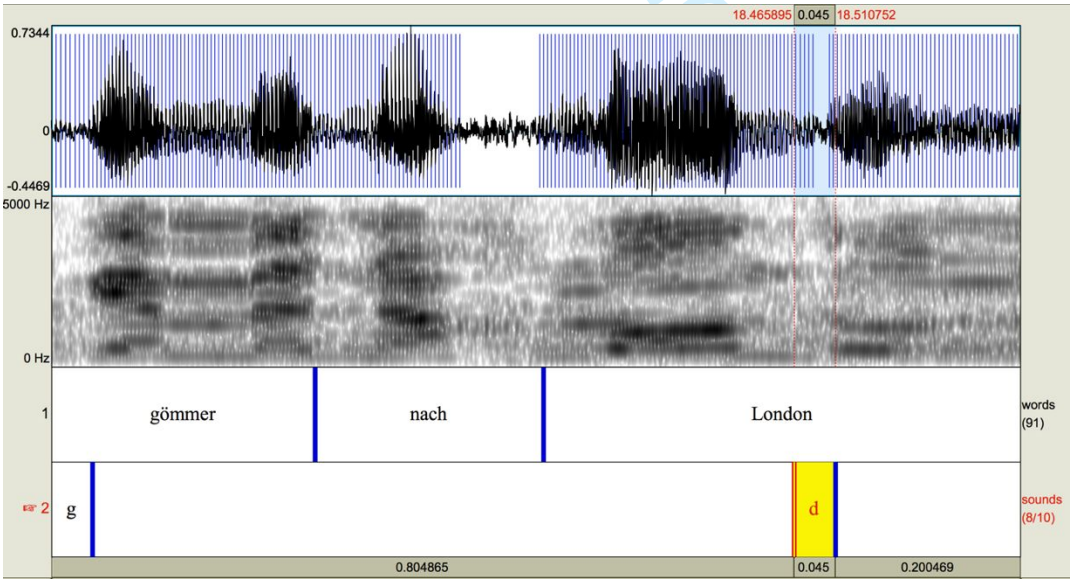

Figure 5: Waveform and spectrogram of *gömmer nach London* pronounced by Blerta

5.3 *More on voiced lenis plosives in Zurich German: a comparison between multilingual and monolingual speakers*

In order to analyze in a more thorough way the occurrence of such sociophonetic variables in ethnolectal Zurich German, a pilot study was conducted in a secondary school located in a typically multicultural neighbourhood of the city of Zurich (Morand et al., 2019). Almost all of the 20 pupils recorded (12 females, mean age: 13.6 years) are bilingual with a typical migrant language (e.g., Albanian, Kurdish, Tamil, etc.); according to their self-reports, acquisition of the Zurich dialect started on average at age 4.4. Each of the subjects read 30 phonetically rich sentences containing five lenis stops at the three canonical places of articulation (bilabial, alveolar, velar) in both word-initial and word-medial position. This procedure yielded 600 tokens which were analysed acoustically and statistically with regard to the proportion over which the respective segments is voiced (for more methodological details, see Morand et al., 2019).

In order to compare the speech of these multilingual speakers with the pronunciation of L1 speakers of Zurich German, a parallel analysis of an already existing corpus was carried out. In a previous study on fundamental frequency effects of obstruents, Ladd and Schmid (2018) had recorded 20 female University students (mean age: 24.3 years); from this sample 10 subjects were chosen whose parents were both L1 speakers of a Swiss German dialect. The speech material included 20 sentences with word-initial lenis plosives (10 bilabials and 10 alveolars), yielding 200 tokens. The boxplots in Fig. 6 report the mean proportion of voicing in Zurich German lenis plosives in the two groups of speakers (monolingual vs. multilingual):

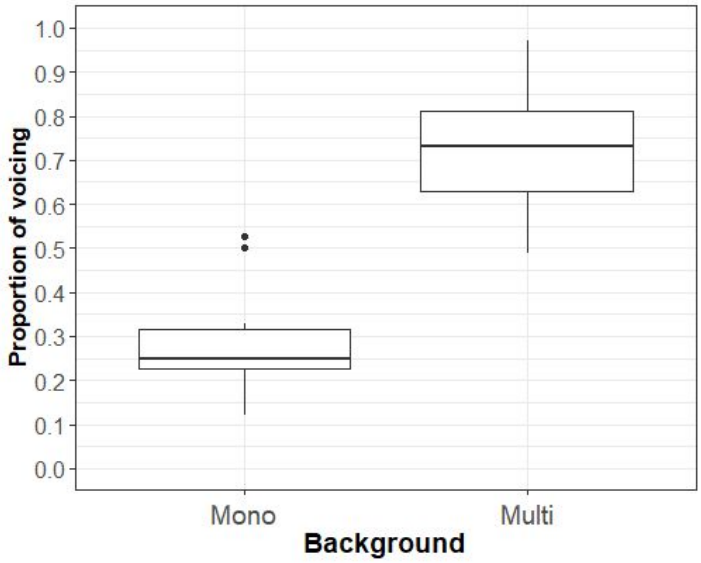

Figure 6: Proportion of voicing in lenis stops in two groups of speakers of Zurich German

The graph reveals a clear of effect of linguistic background, given that in the monolingual group the proportion of voicing rarely exceeds 0.3, whereas for the multicultural speakers the proportion of voicing is generally higher than 0.6. This result may be taken as evidence for the fact that voicing of lenis plosives does indeed constitute a sociophonetic variable in the Zurich German dialect.[4]

There is no evident reason for why plosive voicing became a phonetic marker of ethnolectal speech in German-speaking Switzerland. It would be too easy to interpret this feature as an automatic interference of the speakers' heritage languages: while it is true that the languages of the Balkan Sprachbund, typically associated with speakers of the multiethnolect, do have voiced plosives, the same also holds true for Italian, but – as we have seen – it appears that Italo-Swiss bilinguals do not exhibit voiced plosives in their pronunciation of Zurich German words (cf. Fig. 2). Rather, a more plausible explanation might lie in the amount of traditional, monolingual input the migrant children are exposed to during dialect acquisition. Whereas Italo-Swiss bilinguals are supposed to interact more frequently with monolingual speakers due to their relatively higher position in the socio-economic hierarchy, the peergroups

of adolescents belonging to more recent migrant communities are composed almost exclusively of bilinguals, as in the case of the school class investigated by Morand et al. (2019, 1601); thus, the interference of the respective heritage languages might reinforce the voiced pronunciation of plosives as a common feature of multiethnolectal speech.[5]

6. Discussion and conclusion

The sociolinguistic context of German-speaking Switzerland provides a number of interesting facts for the study of dialect acquisition and migration, given its long migration history, the high proportion of foreigners in the overall population today and the diverse composition of the different migrant communities. Size, history and degree of integration of the different ethnic groups may indeed determine rather diverse perspectives of multilingual and multicultural development for individuals with immigration background.

The Italian community in German-speaking Switzerland has been of great interest for Auer's (1999) dynamic typology of bilingual speech. The examination of new conversational data from the corpus of Russo (2013) basically confirms previous observations about language mixing (Franceschini 1998), but it also suggests that the patterns of bilingual speech might be more varied than had been expected. From a diachronic point of view, the Italo-Swiss bilingual community not only conserves a relative stable structure of the sociolinguistic repertoire (with a particularly strong position of a traditional variety of the local Swiss German dialect; cf. Schmid 2005b, 188), but there has also been a considerable continuity over decades regarding the forms and functions of bilingual speech (see the comparision with data from the nineties in Schmid and Russo 2017). Most importantly for the purpose of the present contribution, a closer look at the Swiss German dialect spoken by Italian second-generation immigrants reveals that their lexis, grammar and in particular their pronunciation neatly resembles the variety of monolingual Swiss speakers.

As a matter of fact, there is no evidence that Italians adopted the new ethnolectal speaking styles that emerged after the year 2000. Instead, the two popular glottonyms commonly attributed to multiethnolects by Swiss people are *Jugotüütsch* and *Balkan-Slang* (Tissot, Galliker and Schmid, 2011); according to this stereotype, the prototypical speakers of these ways of speaking are individuals originating from the former Republic of Yugoslavia. This obviously raises the question whether the two scenarios of dialect acquisition are related to particular ethnic groups. The examples provided in this contribution would seem to suggest that bilingual speech without dialect transformation is typical for Italians, whereas speakers of Albanian would rather create a new speaking style in Swiss German. At most, such a relationship is to be understood as probabilistic rather than deterministic. Still, the Italian immigration differs from the one from the Balkans on both historical and demographic grounds. The first immigrants from Italy already arrived towards the end of the nineteenth century (Schmid 1994, 17-21), and Italians were by far the most numerous foreign population during the whole twentieth century, whereas immigrants from the Balkans started to arrive in Switzerland during the seventies and increased substantially in the ninetiees (Wanner 2004, 12). In the year 2017, Italians still were the largest immigrant group in Switzerland (15,6% of the total foreign permanent resident population), whereas the relative percentages for the ethnically diverse groups from Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia together amount to 11.8% (Federal Statistical Office 2018, 11). This historical and demographic difference has two sociolinguistic consequences: on the one hand, Italians have more opportunities to speak their heritage language outside the family (e.g., among neighbours or at work), while on the other hand the Swiss German dialect already forms part of their linguistic repertoire within the family and is transmitted from the second to the third generation. Children from the later arrived migrant groups often acquire the Swiss dialect only at the age of entering school; this is the case of most of the 20 subjects analyzed in section 5.3, who live in a predominantly

multicultural neighbourhood and interact mostly with other immigrant children (Morand et al. 2019, 1601).

As a matter of fact, as the very notion of 'multiethnolect' rightly suggests, such speaking styles are nowadays practiced not only by speakers originating from the Balkans, but by youth with very diverse ethnic background. A hypothesis which merits to be further investigated could be that a common characteristic of these speakers resides in their belonging to ethnic communities with a relatively recent migration history in Switzerland, and therefore also with a lower socioeconomic status and lesser degree of cultural integration. Some structural features of dialect transformation – both on the grammatical and the phonetic level – might indeed be the outcome of 'imperfect learning'. Given the strong multicultural character of some neighbourhoods and schools, children with migrant backgrounds have few opportunities to get in contact with monolingual and monocultural Swiss speakers (often only teachers, as in the secondary school investigated in Bruno 2019 and Morand et al. 2019).

While demographic and social factors such as the overall rise and increasing ethnic diversity of immigrant population in Switzerland in the last decades may to some extent explain where and when multiethnolectal speaking styles have emerged, the question as to why they have arisen at all is more difficult to answer. Tentatively, one may hypothesize that the main indexical meaning underlying the multiethnic dialect is a general sentiment of belonging which opposes 'allochthonous' speakers (immigrants) to 'authochtonous' speakers who represent traditional Swiss culture. Perhaps such a sociolinguistic development reflects a general decrease of the otherwise allegedly high integration capacity of Swiss society (cf. Liebig, Kohls and Krause 2012).

From the point of view of sociolinguistic typology, future research will have to tackle two issues related to the illustrated scenarios of dialect acquisition (bilingual speech and dialect transformation), i.e. representativeness and exhaustiveness. With regard to representativeness, it appears that we are better informed on bilingual speech among Italian immigrants than on the

linguistic nature of multiethnolectal speech. The fact that the same linguistic features and discourse patterns have been observed in a number of corpora collected during several decades among the Italian community (e.g., Schmid 1993, Franceschini 1998, Russo 2013) certainly testifies not only to the diachronic stability, but also to the representativeness of these corpora (cf. also the short research overview in Schmid 2005, 136-145, as well as the comparative study of Schmid and Russo 2017). On the other hand, it is true that most of the documentation on Swiss German ethnolects has been anectotal so far (e.g., Tissot, Schmid and Galliker 2011, Schmid 2017). Still, the first quantitative studies underway (e.g., Morand et al. 2019) do provide empirical evidence for the phonetic features described in the previous literature (Schmid 2011, 2012). What is more, a morphosyntactic analysis of the speech of the same speakers investigated in Morand et al. (2019) does reveal numerous utterances in which function words such as articles and prepositions are omitted (Bruno 2019), thus corroborating the picture provided by Tissot, Schmid and Galliker (2011).

Regarding the second issue of exhaustiveness, I would by no means claim that the two scenarios presented in this contribution grasp the whole range of choices immigrant adolescents may adopt when it comes to dialect acquisition. Rather, it is conceivable that a certain individual does not adhere to either of the two scenarios, avoiding both bilingual speech and dialect transformation. Also, bilingual speech and dialect transformation can occur in the same speaker, as can be seen to some extent in Blerta's communicative behaviour (example 4), and it may well be the case that in the future even additional scenarios of dialect acquisition will emerge.

It has now become clear that we are far from having fully understood the processes underlying the acquisition of Swiss German dialects by second-generation immigrants. Are multiethnolects simply to be considered speaking styles of youth with immigrant background or are they going to constitute new social varieties of Swiss German dialects (cf. Quist 2008, Tissot, Schmid and Galliker 2011)? To which extent are the speakers aware of their particular way of speaking and thus in control of particular linguistic variables? To put it in terms of

Labov's (1972) typology of sociolingiustic variables: are multiethnolectal features 'indicators' or 'markers'? In the long run, this should lead to a broader scope of research on dialect acquisition among second-generation immigrants, moving from the production side towards the perception and social interpretation of multiethnolectal speech.

Notes

[1] The widespread glottonym 'Swiss German' (or *Schwyzertüütsch*) is to be intended as a cover term for all the Alemannic dialects of Switzerland (Alemannic dialects are spoken also in neighbouring regions of Germany, Austria and France). As such, the term 'Swiss German' refers to a sociolinguistic entity which denotes the low variety within the diglossia, but there exists no specific language variety that might be labelled 'Swiss German' nor is there anything like a supraregional dialect *koiné*.

[2] In thks contribution, the term 'code-switching' is used as an umbrella term for different types of language alternation in bilingual speech.

[3] The recording contains three parts extracted from a longer video, and there are a number of utterances that have been cut out before parts 2 and 3. In the transcript, pauses are marked as periods of ellipsis indicating their length – e.g. (.), (..) or (…) – and partly correspond to the turns of the interlocutor on the phone. Stretches signalled by (x) stand for words in Albanian that are not understood. The original transcription has been slightly modified, also regarding the translations from Albanian for which I acknowledge the help of Endrit Llanaj.

[4] Alternative explanations for the results found in Morand et al. (2019) are possible, though, considering that the monolingual speakers are all female, older and University students. More research is needed in order to verify the possible influence of factors such as gender, age, and level of education.

[5] Theoretically, still another source for the emergence of voiced plosives in the Swiss German ethnolects could come from the influence of standard German. As we have seen above, a certain degree of mixture between dialect and standard is characteristic of Osman's speech (example 4), in particular at the lexical level. In the pronunciation (northern) standard German, lenis plosives of can be passively voiced in intervocalic position (Jessen & Ringen 2002), but this seems not to be the case of the variety of standard German spoken in Switzerland, which shares the same voiceless realization of lenis plosives as the Swiss German dialects (Hove 2002, 74). However, a direct interference of the pronunciation of (northern) standard German on Swiss German multiethnolects is to be excluded.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the author.

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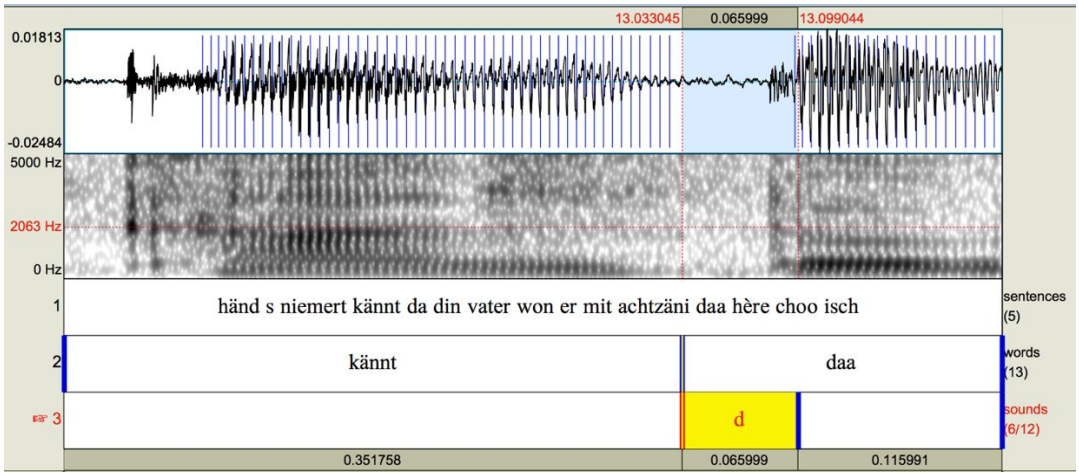

Figure 1: Waveform and spectrogram of the words *kännt daa* pronounced by speaker VR

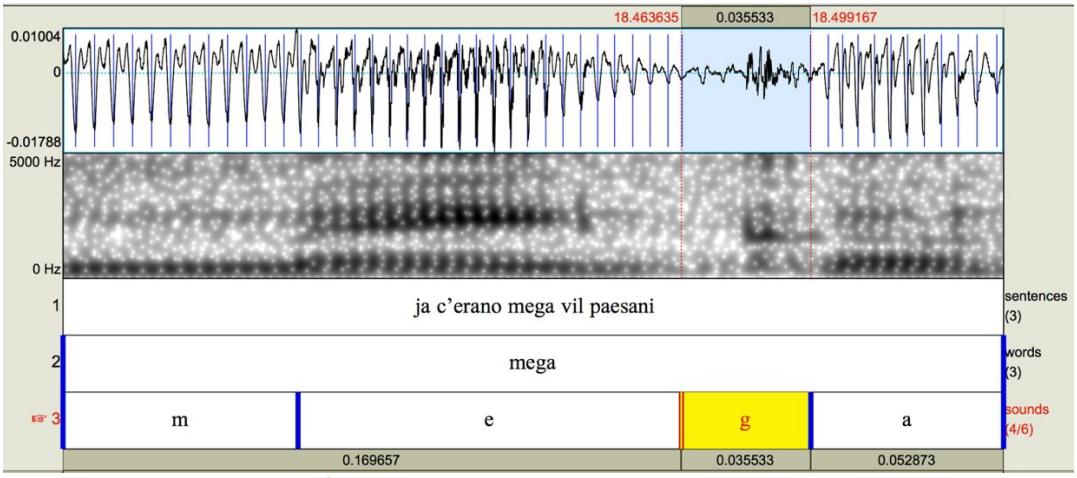

Figure 2: Waveform and spectrogram of the word *mega* pronounced by speaker KC

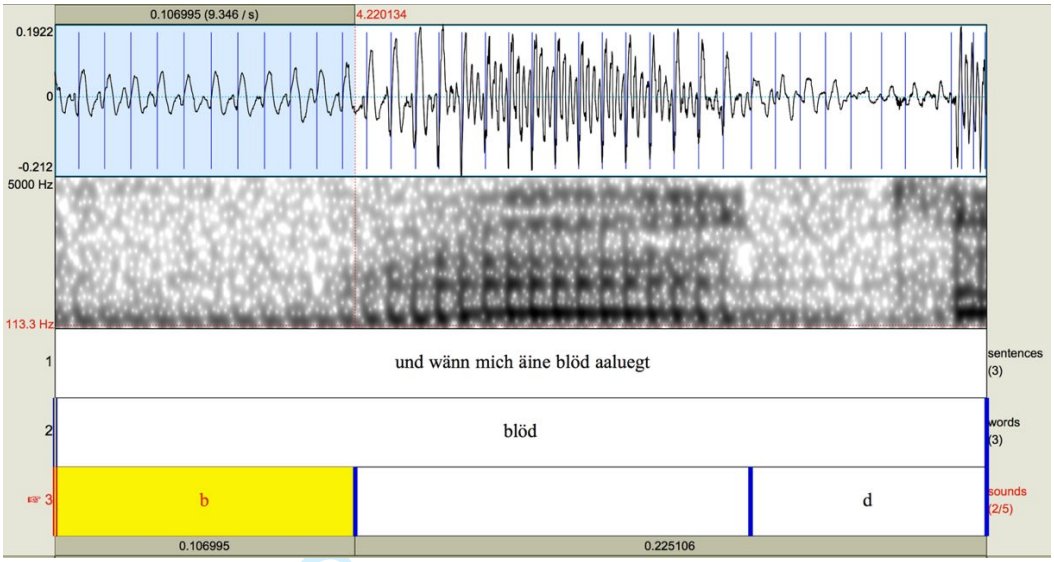

Figure 3: Waveform and spectrogram of the word *blöd* 'stupid' pronounced by Osman

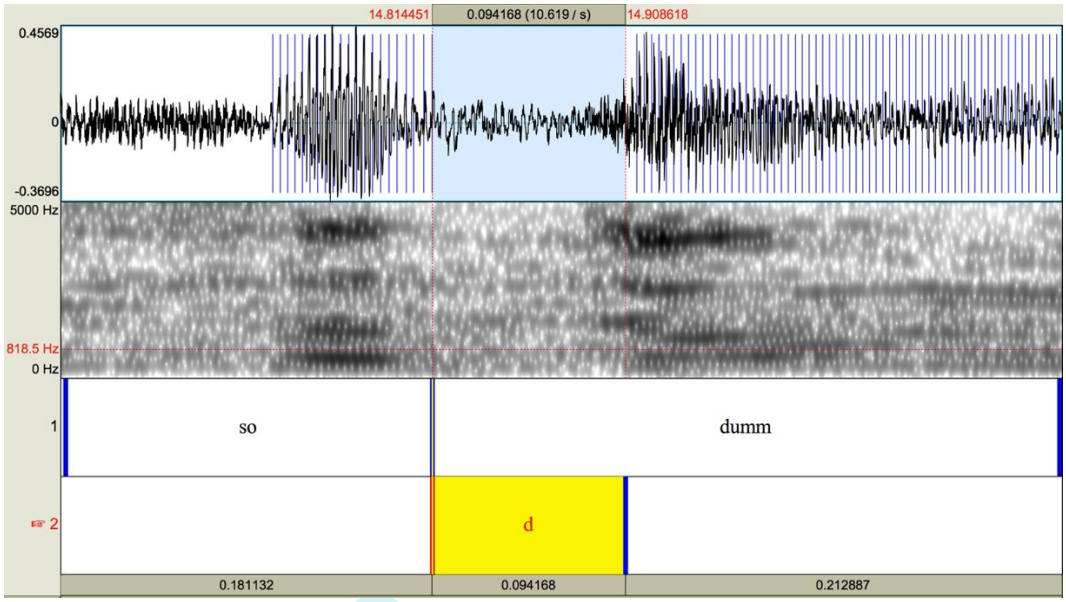

Figure 4: Waveform and spectrogram of the words *so dumm* 'so silly' pronounced by Blerta

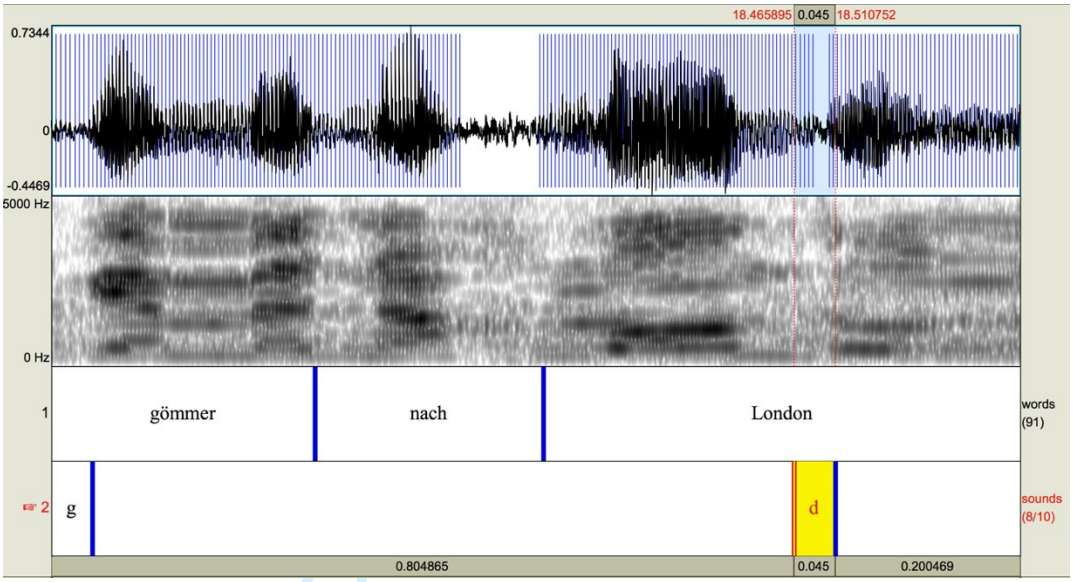

Figure 5: Waveform and spectrogram of *gömmer nach London* pronounced by Blerta

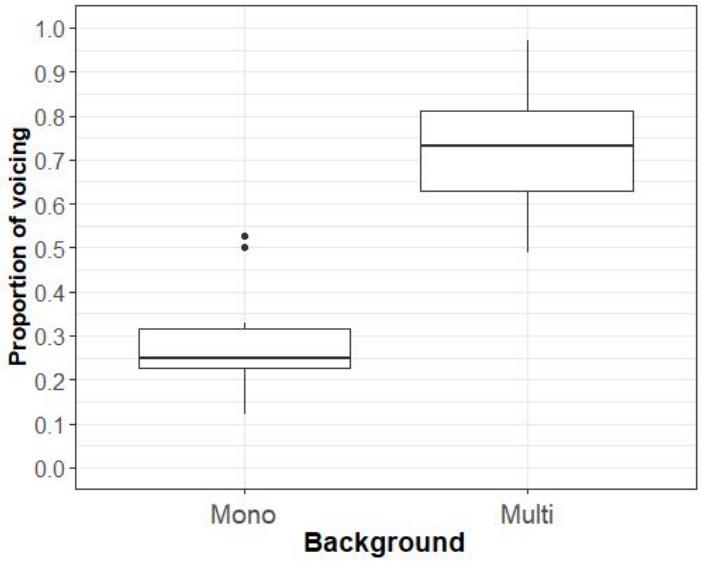

Figure 6: Proportion of voicing in lenis stops in two groups of speakers of Zurich German